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Last week's announcement from President Obama and Veterans Affairs Secretary Eric Shinseki was welcome news for the hundreds of thousands of American veterans who suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other combat-related mental health diseases. The VA's new regulations will make it significantly easier for returning war-fighters to get the help they need.

But we have to do a better job of identifying and assisting troops and veterans who are at risk . That is why Congress must take the next step to assist afflicted veterans by passing a bipartisan bill that I introduced with Rep. Michael McMahon, D-N.Y., the "Veterans' Mental Health Assessments and Screenings Act." Our bill would expand mental health screenings for returning war-fighters and require returning service members to participate in confidential, one-to-one screenings with licensed mental health professionals. By mandating screenings for all service members returning from active duty, we hope to defeat the stigma of seeking help for mental injuries. We also make provisions to allow service members to return home despite their answers on the assessment.

By some estimates, 20 percent of the more than 2 million men and women who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan suffer from PTSD. We owe it to our troops and veterans to take action quickly and solve this growing problem.

U.S. REP. TOM ROONEY
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Editor's note: Rep. Tom Rooney represents Florida's 16th Congressional District.